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Operations and Maintenance Facility South

Federal Highway Administration Record of Decision

August 2024

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

SOUNDTRANSIT

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DOT	United States Department of Transportation
EIS	environmental impact statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
I-5	Interstate 5
LRVs	light rail vehicles
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
OMF South	Operations and Maintenance Facility South
ROD	Record of Decision
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
Sound Transit	Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority
Sound Transit 3	The Regional Transit System Plan for Central Puget Sound
TDLE	Tacoma Dome Link Extension
USC	United States Code
WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation

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1 DECISION

The Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) plans to build and operate a light rail operations and maintenance facility in its South Corridor (OMF South). The facility will meet Sound Transit's needs for an expanded fleet of light rail vehicles (LRVs) and will support the expansion of the Link light rail system. The project is located in the City of Federal Way in King County, Washington, and is adjacent to the Interstate 5 (I-5) right-of-way. Portions of OMF South will be accommodated within or will affect the I-5 right-of-way, which requires Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approval.

Environmental review of the OMF South project was completed by Sound Transit and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in a joint National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) issued in June 2024.

FTA, as the lead federal agency, selected the preferred alternative and issued its Record of Decision (ROD) for the project on August 7, 2024. Pursuant to 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 771.127, FTA's ROD determined that the requirements of NEPA have been satisfied for the construction and operation of the OMF South.

FHWA, as a cooperating agency under NEPA, issues this ROD to address FHWA's anticipated approval actions related to elements of the project affecting Interstate right-of-way. These elements include the following:

- Interstate design approvals.
- An airspace lease/cooperative agreement for use of the Interstate right-of-way.
- Breaks in access, including those determined necessary during the design process, as well as those requested during construction.
- An operations and maintenance agreement related to Interstate right-of-way use.

This ROD is based on FHWA's review and independent assessment of the planning and environmental process followed by FTA and Sound Transit. That process involved numerous cooperating and participating agencies, listed below, in developing project alternatives and evaluating their effects.

This FHWA ROD references the environmental review documents and FTA's ROD where applicable.

Cooperating Agencies

- FHWA
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- City of Federal Way
- City of Kent

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Participating Tribes and Agencies

- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
- Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Puyallup Tribe of the Puyallup Reservation
- Snoqualmie Indian Tribe
- Squaxin Island Tribe of the Squaxin Island Reservation
- Suquamish Indian Tribe of the Port Madison Reservation
- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Bonneville Power Administration
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
- Washington State Department of Ecology
- Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Seattle Public Utilities
- King County
- Puget Sound Clean Air Agency
- Puget Sound Regional Council

The environmental review process for the project included the OMF South SEPA Draft EIS (March 2021), the OMF South NEPA Draft/SEPA Supplemental Draft EIS (September 2023), and the OMF South NEPA/SEPA Final EIS (June 2024) (collectively referred to as the "environmental review documents") and led to the determinations made in this ROD.

The OMF South project is described in the Final EIS, approved by FTA on May 6, 2024, and issued on June 7, 2024. The Final EIS Notice of Availability appeared in the Federal Register on June 7, 2024. FHWA served as a cooperating agency on the EIS and provided input during its development, including written comments that were submitted on the 2023 NEPA Draft/SEPA Supplemental Draft EIS. FHWA has conducted an independent review of the Final EIS and concluded that its comments have been satisfied or will be addressed during final design activities. Pursuant to 40 CFR 1506.3, FHWA hereby adopts the OMF South Final EIS as it relates to FHWA's decisions, which are detailed above.

FTA completed its ROD for the OMF South on August 7, 2024. With the ROD, FTA issued its finding that the requirements of NEPA have been met for the project. FHWA has prepared this FHWA ROD for elements of the project affecting Interstate right-of-way requiring FHWA approvals. The OMF South will affect I-5 right-of-way in the City of Federal Way in King County, Washington.

As a cooperating agency, FHWA is adopting FTA's NEPA document for the limited purpose of supporting FHWA's future approval actions for OMF South.

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1.1 Project Description

Sound Transit plans to build and operate a light rail operations and maintenance facility in its South Corridor — OMF South. The facility will meet Sound Transit's needs for an expanded fleet of LRVs. OMF South will support the expansion of the Link light rail system as part of Sound Transit 3: The Regional Transit System Plan for Central Puget Sound (Sound Transit 3). The project will also help implement the Puget Sound Regional Council VISION 2050 (PSRC 2020) and the Sound Transit Regional Transit Long Range Plan (Sound Transit 2014).

Under Sound Transit 3, the light rail system in central Puget Sound is planned to grow to 116 miles, with over 80 stations and a total fleet of approximately 460 LRVs. The system would expand north to Everett; south to Federal Way and Tacoma; east to Redmond, south Kirkland, and Issaquah; and west to West Seattle and Ballard by 2042. To meet the system expansion goals, Sound Transit needs two additional operations and maintenance facilities: one each in the North and South Corridors. While OMF South will be in the South Corridor, it will support Sound Transit's systemwide expansion by providing a facility to receive, test, commission, store, maintain, and deploy an increased LRV fleet for the entire light rail system.

The purpose of OMF South is to:

- Provide a facility with the capacity to receive, test, commission, store, maintain, and deploy vehicles to support the intended level of service for the systemwide light rail system expansion.
- Support efficient and reliable light rail service that minimizes system operating costs.
- Support and connect efficiently to the regional system and be technically and financially feasible to build, operate, and maintain, consistent with the Sound Transit 3 Plan and Sound Transit's Regional Transit Long-Range Plan.

The project is needed because:

- The current regional system lacks a facility with sufficient capacity and suitable location to support the efficient and reliable long-term operations for systemwide light rail expansion, including the next phase of expansion in King and Pierce Counties.
- New light rail maintenance and storage capacity needs to be available with sufficient time to accept delivery of and commission new vehicles to meet the expansion needs outlined in Sound Transit 3 and to store existing vehicles while the new vehicles are tested and prepared.

The Sound Transit Board selected the South 336th Street Alternative with the 40 mph Alignment as the project to be built, and it is the project that is addressed in this ROD. This alternative was identified in the Final EIS as the Preferred Alternative. The Final EIS describes in detail the Preferred Alternative's site location and design, the mainline alignment and profile, and other project components, including lead tracks, tail tracks, and a test track.

FTA, in its ROD, also selected the South 336th Street Alternative with the 40 mph Alignment as the project to be built. This FHWA ROD is being issued to support future Interstate approvals.

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1.1.1 OMF South Site

The OMF South site is approximately 66 acres, and about 0.1 of those acres are within the I-5 right-of-way. The site includes the OMF building, the Maintenance of Way building, the Link System-Wide Storage building, OMF tracks that provide storage for LRVs, parking, training tracks, and yard areas with 480 parking spaces, and lead tracks to connect to the mainline tracks. Figure 1 shows a conceptual layout and the portion of the site within the I-5 right-of-way.

Lead tracks will allow LRVs to access the mainline tracks. Elevated lead tracks will extend from the northeast corner of the site to the mainline tracks. Similarly, elevated lead tracks will extend from the southeast corner of the site connecting to the tail tracks.

The project includes an extension of 18th Place S from S 336th Street to S 340th Street. Additionally, 21st Avenue S will be extended south to a new intersection with S 344th Street.

1.1.2 Mainline Track and Test Track Alignment

The OMF South site requires approximately 1.4 miles of connecting mainline tracks, including a tail track, from the Federal Way Downtown Station to the site (Figure 2). The mainline tracks are within the western portion of the I-5 right-of-way just south of Winged Foot Way to the terminus of the tail track. These tracks will serve as revenue mainline tracks if the Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE) is constructed and operated as proposed. TDLE is currently under environmental review.

The mainline is elevated from the Federal Way Downtown Station to near S 328th Street and south of S 330th Street to the OMF South facility. The tracks will be at grade between S 328th Street and S 330th Street. The mainline track structure also includes traction power substations, signal/communication bungalows, and end-of-track protection.

Tail tracks will extend approximately 1,000 feet past the southeast corner of the OMF South site. Until light rail is extended farther south, the tail tracks will be used to allow trains to access the Link system if the northern lead tracks are out of service. A portion of the tail track is within a WSDOT-owned property along 21st Avenue S, north of S 344th Street.

In addition to the mainline and tail tracks, a 0.9-mile test track will run parallel to the mainline tracks from S 324th Street to just south of S 336th Street primarily within the I-5 right-of-way. The test track will be at the same elevation as the mainline tracks, except for the north end of the track near S 324th Street, where the test track will be at grade and the mainline tracks will be elevated. A building near the test track will include a breakroom and facilities for employees.

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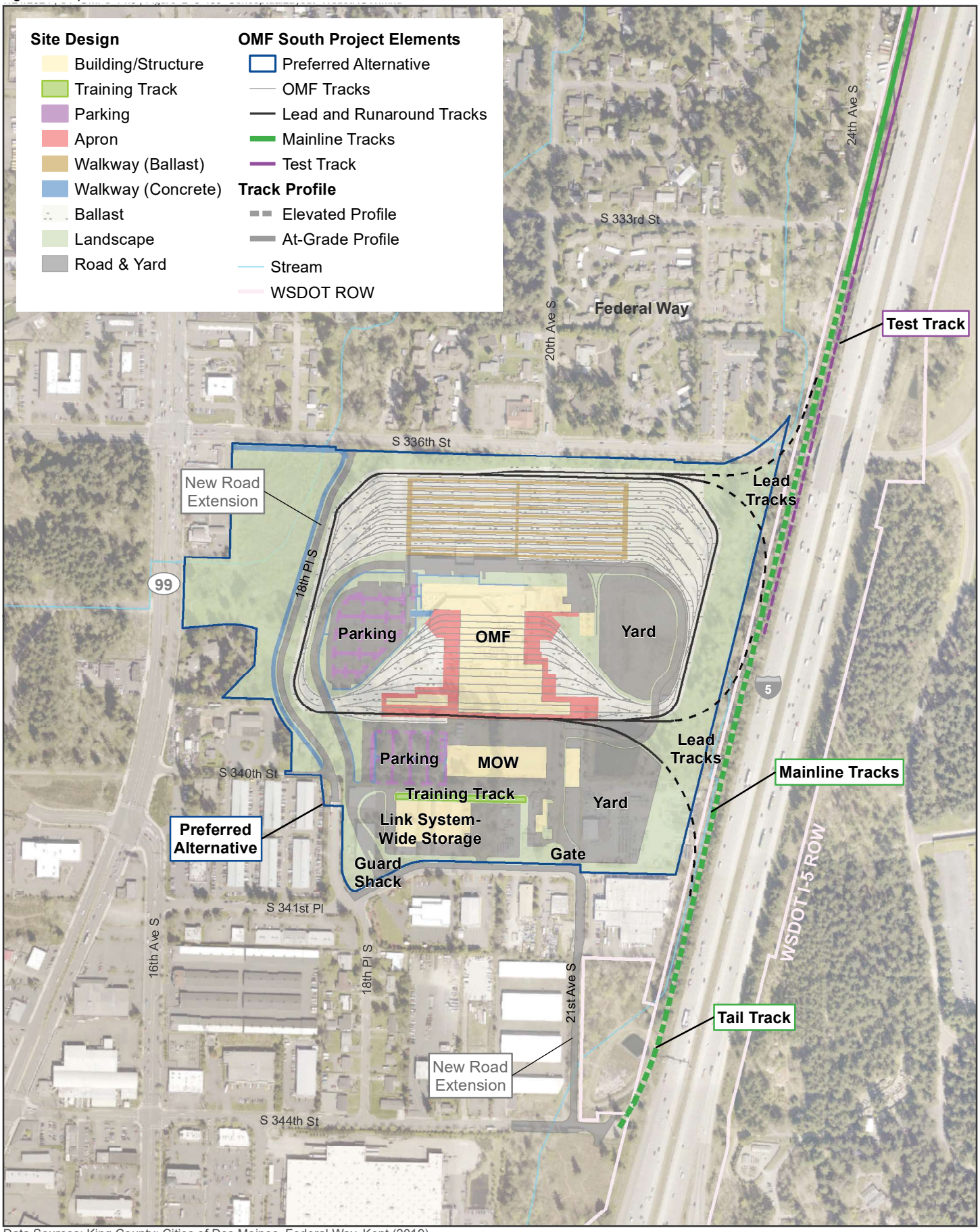

Data Sources: King County; Cities of Des Moines, Federal Way, Kent (2019).

N

0 500 1,000 Feet

FIGURE 1
Conceptual Layout
Preferred Alternative

OMF South

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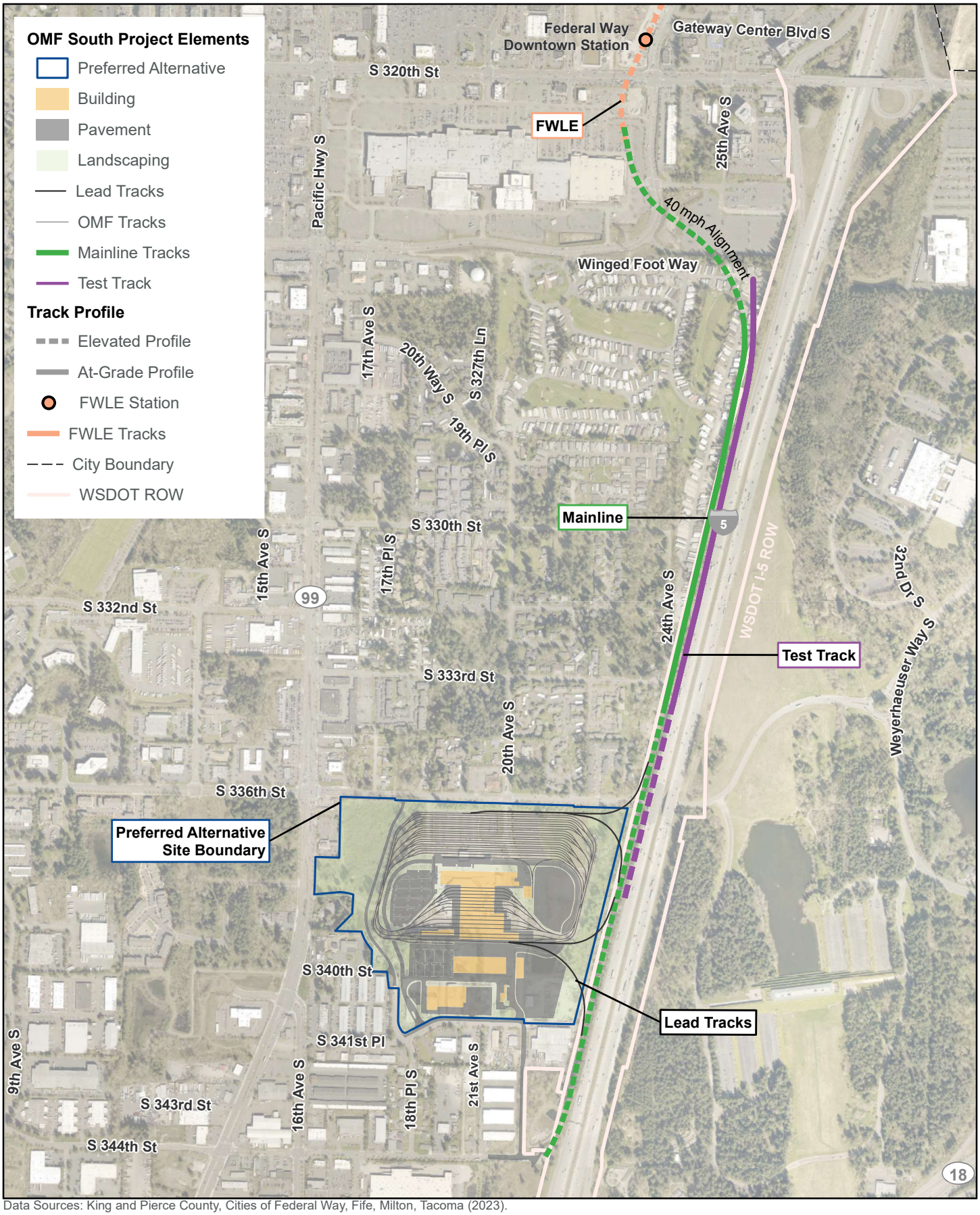

Data Sources: King and Pierce County, Cities of Federal Way, Fife, Milton, Tacoma (2023).

N

0 1,000 2,000 Feet

FIGURE 2
Preferred Alternative Site and Connecting Mainline Track

OMF South

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1.2 Basis for the Decision

1.2.1 FHWA's Approval Actions

FHWA's approval actions are needed to support OMF South, as documented in the environmental review documents and this ROD. As a cooperating agency, FHWA is adopting FTA's NEPA document for the limited purpose of supporting FHWA's future approval actions for OMF South. For information on the basis for FTA and Sound Transit's decisions in selecting the alternative to be built, please see FTA's ROD.

The OMF South Final EIS provides analysis to support FHWA decisions, and it will be used as a basis for FHWA approvals as necessary for the project. Additional information may be developed during final design to supplement the information in the Final EIS. FHWA approvals that will be required for the OMF South include:

- Potential Interstate design approvals.
- An airspace lease/cooperative agreement to authorize Sound Transit's use of Interstate right-of-way. To inform an airspace lease/cooperative agreement, Sound Transit, in coordination with WSDOT and FHWA, will prepare a Compatibility Report to define the area where OMF South infrastructure can be constructed and not interfere with existing or future I-5 uses.
- Breaks in access that occur when the light rail enters or exits the I-5 right-of-way. Approvals will include those breaks determined necessary during the design process and those requested during construction. Sound Transit, in coordination with WSDOT and FHWA, will develop an operations and maintenance agreement related to Interstate right-of-way use.

FHWA, as a cooperating agency under NEPA and as the federal agency responsible for the anticipated project approvals noted above, has considered the findings in the Final EIS related to elements of the OMF South affecting Interstate right-of-way.

1.2.2 Planning and Project Development Process

The FTA ROD includes detailed information on the planning and project development process.

1.2.3 Opportunities to Comment

Throughout the seven years of alternatives development/scoping and environmental review processes, Sound Transit provided frequent opportunities for interested members of the public, agencies, and Tribes to engage, share concerns, and discuss specific project details with Sound Transit staff. Sound Transit's public involvement activities to date have included public open houses and workshops, community event participation, stakeholder briefings, email and website updates, web and print advertisements, mailers, and meetings with groups of interested businesses, residents, affected property owners, and others. Appendix B in the Final EIS (Public Involvement and Agency Coordination) contains more details on public engagement up to the release of that document.

1.2.4 Final EIS Comments

After issuance of the Final EIS, FTA accepted public comments during a 30-day review period prior to issuing its ROD. FTA and Sound Transit received two comment letters on the Final EIS

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for OMF South: one from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a second from Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology).

EPA's comments focused primarily on air quality. They asked for further information regarding the area's relatively high $PM_{2.5}$ air quality levels in 2022. They also asked for background information for PM_{10}, given the possibility of fugitive dust emissions from construction.

EPA recommends that the FTA ROD provide a summary of project construction emission and calculations for criteria pollutants and hazardous air pollutants. If significant impacts are identified, mitigation measures should be proposed. EPA also recommends the FTA ROD include a fugitive dust emission inventory and a draft fugitive dust control plan.

Finally, EPA states that Sound Transit should continue discussion with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) regarding the Clean Water Act Section 404 permit, noting that the Preferred Alternative has greater impacts to the waters of the U.S. relative to the other alternatives that were evaluated.

Ecology's comment stated support for the selection of the Preferred Alternative with the 40 mph Alignment. Ecology also supports off-site compensatory mitigation for the wetland, stream and buffer impacts, specifically use of the Port of Tacoma's Upper Clear Creek mitigation bank and King County's mitigation reserves program.

Table 1 lists EPA's comments on the Final EIS with responses from FTA and Sound Transit. As the Ecology letter was a statement of support that does not necessitate a response, it is not included in the table. EPA and Ecology's comment letters are in Appendix C of the FTA ROD.

Table 1 EPA Final EIS Comments and Responses

EPA Comment	FTA/Sound Transit Response
Per Table 3.8-1 of the FEIS, nearby monitoring data shows that $PM_{2.5}$ air quality levels were high in 2022 and were not below the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) in all cases. Therefore, for clarity, we recommend presenting the three-year average design values, where applicable, to demonstrate the area is meeting the NAAQS, despite the exceedances in 2022. To better support the FEIS conclusion that concentrations are below the NAAQS, EPA recommends that the ROD: • Include an additional column for Table 3.8-1 to show the 3-year average design concentration for the $PM_{2.5}$ background concentrations for comparison to the NAAQS, providing support to the conclusion that background air quality meets the NAAQS and is sufficiently low.	The data in Table 3.8-1 of the Final EIS includes days affected by wildfire. The relatively high readings for $PM_{2.5}$ in 2022 were attributable to the number of wildfires that year. The monitoring results presented in the table are for both the annual mean and the 98th percentile 24-hour value averaged over 3 years. According to the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (PSCAA) 2022 Air Quality Data Summary (PSCAA 2023), wildfire smoke impacted air quality on 26 days in September and October 2022. EPA allows data from such events to be excluded from regulatory calculations. When days impacted by wildfire smoke are excluded, the background air quality is below the NAAQS and monitors in PSCAA's four-county region fell below the federal standard for $PM_{2.5}$ of 35 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu g/m^3$).

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Table 1 EPA Final EIS Comments and Responses (continued)

EPA Comment	FTA/Sound Transit Response
• Include background PM_{10} concentrations in the air analysis, given the majority of possible fugitive dust impacts from the project could be due to PM_{10} emissions.	Background PM_{10} concentrations are no longer available. PSCAA ended direct monitoring of PM_{10} in 2006 because the region had met PM_{10} federal standards for several years (PSCAA 2023).
To better support the FEIS conclusions regarding significance of construction emissions, the EPA recommends that the ROD: • Provide a summary of project emission calculations (both criteria and HAP) for the construction phase of the project. Although the use of a fugitive dust plan and construction best management practices will minimize particulate pollution, criteria pollutants and HAPs will still be generated by the operation of construction equipment (e.g., through engine exhaust, etc.). A summary will provide transparency to the public and may help support the FEIS conclusion that the facility construction will not lead to an exceedance of a NAAQS standard. • If significant impacts are identified, discuss potential mitigation to sensitive receptors and vulnerable populations, including communities with environmental justice concerns.	At this stage of the project design, Sound Transit does not have a comprehensive construction schedule nor a final list of the types and numbers of construction equipment that will be used. Any construction emissions calculations included in the ROD would be speculative. To address construction emissions, the following text has been included into the ROD Section 1.3, Air Quality: "Sound Transit commits to following all applicable federal and state regulations concerning air quality emissions, including use of a fugitive dust control plan and best management practices during construction and operation of the facility."
We continue to recommend that the ROD disclose a fugitive dust emission inventory and include a draft fugitive dust plan.	The Project is not currently designed to a level that would enable Sound Transit to prepare a meaningful inventory of potential fugitive dust emissions. As the project owner, Sound Transit will require the contractor to develop and implement a fugitive dust control plan. Please see the text included in the ROD Section 1.3, Air Quality (above response).
Given that the FEIS indicates the Preferred Alternative would result in greater impacts to waters of the U.S. than all other alternatives evaluated, the EPA recommends continuing discussions with the Corps prior to issuing the ROD to ensure the Sound Transit Board understands how the restrictions on discharges contained within the CWA Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines may affect authorization of this alternative. More specifically, the Corps is only able to issue a CWA Section 404 permit for the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative. The Corps may need additional information to fully evaluate whether the Preferred Alternative complies with the restrictions on discharges provided in the CWA Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines.	Sound Transit has been consulting with the Corps and other resource agencies over the past 2 years to explore opportunities to decrease the potential Project impacts to waters of the U.S. and, where that is not possible, to find appropriate mitigation. Discussions with the Corps are continuing. As shown in Appendix K of the Final EIS, Sound Transit is working on potential design refinements to reduce the impacts of the Preferred Alternative to waters of the U.S. A Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) alternative analysis is being prepared to provide additional information and to demonstrate how the Preferred Alternative with the proposed design refinements is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative.

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2 MEASURES TO MINIMIZE HARM AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

Sound Transit has designed the project to avoid and minimize harm to the natural and built environment. Appendix B, Mitigation Plan, of the FTA ROD states the environmental commitments Sound Transit will implement. The Mitigation Plan includes environmental commitments for where the project affects the Interstate right-of-way and that will be implemented in the Interstate right-of-way. FHWA expects that the FTA ROD requirements will be implemented and completed.

3 MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

To ensure compliance with required mitigation and to assist with FTA oversight, Sound Transit will use its mitigation monitoring program to periodically track, monitor, and report the status of the project environmental commitments identified in the ROD to FTA. Upon FTA approval, the environmental commitments, in coordination with agencies with jurisdictions, may be modified during the final design, permitting, and construction processes.

If any additional monitoring is requested as part of FHWA approval actions, FHWA will specify such monitoring conditions in its approval documentation, outside of this ROD. These approval documents will be prepared during final design and construction and may include an Interstate design approval, air space lease, breaks in access approvals, and an operations and maintenance agreement.

4 DETERMINATION AND FINDINGS

4.1 Environmentally Preferred Alternative

FTA, in its ROD, made the decision about the OMF South project. This FHWA ROD is being issued to support future Interstate approvals for the FTA-selected project alternative.

FTA determined the following in Section 2.2.4 of its ROD regarding the environmentally preferred alternative:

> All of the build alternatives in the Final EIS advance environmental and sustainability goals of the State and region by supporting the expansion of regional light rail, which is expected to reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions (Sound Transit 2016). In addition, the build alternatives improve availability and reliability of public transportation in the corridor and throughout the region. They also indirectly support local and regional land use plans that identify the need for high-capacity transit options to help reduce dependency on single occupancy vehicles. Pursuant to 40 CFR § 1505.2, FTA determines that all the build alternatives are environmentally preferable over the No Build Alternative.
>
> The Final EIS discusses how impacts vary among the build alternatives. While there are tradeoffs, FTA also determines that no build alternative is materially more environmentally preferable than another.

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After considering the analysis in the Final EIS, comments on the Draft EIS documents from the public and affected jurisdictions, and other factors, the Sound Transit Board selected the Preferred Alternative (South 336th Street) as the Project to be built. FTA concurs with Sound Transit's decision.

4.2 National Environmental Policy Act

FTA, as the federal lead agency, found that the OMF South has met all applicable standards and that all NEPA requirements have been met, as documented in its ROD. FHWA has reviewed these findings and concurs with all the findings that involve the Interstate right-of-way. FTA's ROD includes discussion of determination and findings related to:

- NEPA
- Executive Order 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribes
- Executive Order 12372 Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs and 23 USC §139 Coordination Requirements
- Clean Air Act
- Clean Water Act Sections 401, 402, and 404
- Coastal Zone Management Act
- Endangered Species Act
- Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act
- Executive Order 12898 and 14096 Environmental Justice
- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
- Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Act

Appendix F, Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Assessment, of the Final EIS assesses potential use of Section 4(f) properties under the DOT Act (49 USC § 303, as implemented by 23 CFR 774). In consultation with the official with jurisdiction, FTA determined that the project would have a *de minimis* impact to the NRHP-eligible Bonneville Power Administration Tacoma-Covington Nos. 2, 3, and 4 and Tacoma Raver No. 1 transmission lines and that the project will not use any other Section 4(f) resources. FHWA conducted a review of the Section 4(f) assessment and finds it meets the requirements of Section 4(f).

Appendix E, Environmental Justice Assessment, of the Final EIS documents the environmental justice analysis performed for the project in compliance with Executive Order 12898, Executive Order 14096, DOT Order 5610.2C – Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, and FTA Circular C-4703.1 – Environmental Justice Policy Guidance for Federal Transit Administration Recipients. FHWA conducted a review of the Environmental Justice Assessment and has concluded that it meets the requirements of FHWA Order 6640.23A – FHWA Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations and that the project will not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority or low-income populations.

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FHWA used its policy, as described in the Noise Policy Frequently Asked Questions, to determine that the FHWA noise regulations (23 CFR 772) do not apply to the project because FHWA is a cooperating agency, the main transportation purpose of the project is transit related, and no highway funds are being used in the project. The OMF South complied with FTA's Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Guide Manual procedures to consider noise associated with the transit project and any highway elements directly affected by the project.

5 CONCLUSION

Having carefully considered the environmental record; environmental commitments summarized in Appendix B of the FTA ROD; Tribal, public, and agency comments; and the findings above, FHWA has determined that:

- The environmental review documents include a record of the environmental impacts of the proposal, adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided, alternatives to the proposal, and irreversible and irretrievable impacts on the environment.
- The environmental process included cooperation and consultation with EPA.
- FTA has determined that the project meets its purpose and need and satisfies the NEPA requirements. FHWA, as a cooperating agency under NEPA, issues this ROD, relying on the underlying environmental review documents, to address FHWA's anticipated approval actions related to elements of the project affecting Interstate right-of-way, as outlined in Section 1 of this ROD.

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Signed by:

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Ralph Rizzo
Division Administrator
Washington Division
Federal Highway Administration

8/29/2024
Date of Approval